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AUTHOR Mc Whinnie, Harold J.
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ABSTRACT

A revised Salkind Art Preference Test was developed with more representational works than in the original. The revised instrument consisted of 39 slides of paintings grouped according to types such as landscape, still life, figure, and portraits. This test was administered to a 72 student sample in a beginning level design history class at a major urban university. Subjects indicated preferences as their degree of like or dislike on a five point Likert scale. Results indicated preferences for more familiar and representational works. (MM)

STUDIES IN AESTHETIC PREFERENCE

(Salkind Art Preference Test Two)

by

Harold J. Mc Whinnie

Department of Design
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

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ABSTRACT

This study reports data from a research project done in the 1985-86 school year. The purpose was to develop a test of aesthetic measure that could be used with college undergraduate students. 72 students in a design history class at a major urban university were given a new form of the Salkind Art Preference Test. This revised instrument consisted of 39 slides grouped according to types of paintings such as landscape, still life, figure, portraits. The slides varied from realistic to abstract but there were more examples of the representation works added than the 30 item Salkind Art Test. A two factor analysis was used with the data and the results reported in this paper.

STUDIES IN AESTHETIC MEASURE

(Factor analysis of Salkind Art Preference Test Two)

BACKGROUND

Studies in aesthetic measure done in the Spring of 1985 with the Salkind Art Test One noted a clear pattern of aesthetic preferences for the more representational items in each slide subject category. (In each grouping of six slides.) The question arose as to what might happen to those observed patterns of preference if more representational slide items were added to the basic test?

The original Salkind Test had been designed for use with children and hence the items selected were on the basis of color and form which did not represent the extremes of realism in such artistic styles as the neo-classic, romantic, or early American. If those elements were added to the test in order to give a greater balance to the artistic styles represented would it make a significant difference in the patterns of preference obtained?

Part of the basic purpose in this sequence of studies in aesthetic measure was to explore the preferences of the late adolescent. The selection of that age level was identified for study because of the interest in discipline based art education (art history, art criticism, and aesthetics) at the secondary school level as a part of the growing awareness of the need for a conceptually based art education as a part of the general education of all students. (Getty, 1987)

Many state departments of education are identifying the components of a one carnegie unit course in the arts for high school graduation. If some of the recent focus of the art educator is at the non-performance and non-production aspects of secondary art education then it seem valuable to develop a testing instrument

which could be used to explore the patterns of preference which might be found among those students. Such was the basic rational and purpose for the series of studies that has been undertaken at this age level as a partial response to the development of discipline based art education in this country.

The research base for these efforts was derived from several sources, both from the art education research and from psychology. The goal was to identify a new methodology for the study of preference which would be descriptive in nature and which would be more suited to the secondary level. We did not wish to continue with the pattern of inferential studies of preference that had led to many blind alleys in previous art education research. (McWhinnie, 1971)

We developed a model for this research effort which could be called demographic. By that we mean studies which do not attempt the assessment of casual relationships among the many variables of aesthetic preference but studies designed to present the status of preference as it can be viewed in the more general school population. We were not interested in the study of preference or changes in preference as a consequence of school-based experience in the general domain of discipline based art education.

A recent Getty conference (Getty, 1989) has shown that the assessment problems in a discipline based art education are many, quite varied, and there can be more than one approach to the measurement of the consequences of a program of art education. We have decided in our basic research effort to concentrate on the study of patterns of preference which can be found in a general population prior to instruction in the arts.

Each of the several domains in a discipline based approach have their own methods of assessment; art history by means of identification and classification as to stylistic characteristics, art criticism by the ability to describe and interpret visual forms, studio art by performance on creative and artistic tasks, and aesthetics by questions and discourse. Studies in aesthetic preference seem to bisect several of those domains; questions of like and dislike are relevant to both art criticism and to aesthetics.

Daniel Berlyne (Berlyne, 1972) introduced several important conceptual formulations into the domain of experimental aesthetics which seem to be relevant to general problems of assessment of DBAE (discipline based art education). One of those conceptual basis was his division of the determinants of the aesthetic response into three categories which were:

(a) Collative Variables (novelty and complexity)
(b) Ecological Variables (assessment contexts)
(c) Psychophysical Variables (perceptual components) (Martindale, 1985)

Again, it would seem that all three of Berlyne's response categories to have relevance for the more general assessment of behavior in art education. At times in the history of art education one or more have dominated the research literature in that field. (McWhinnie and Covington, 1989)

Day (Day, 1985) has observed that the collative variables are not wholly embedded in the arousal dimensions as Berlyne had assumed but also load (by factorial methods) on the psychophysical as well as on the ecological dimensions. Day's research points to some of the methodological problems with methods of data analysis in studies that use factor analysis. However, factorial methods seem to be the most useful for the study of preference in general at least within the general framework of descriptive patterns of preference that we have employed in our research.

One ecological variable is the number and the kinds of images as arranged in some pre-determined order in a test of aesthetic preference. Our modification of the Salkind Art Test should be considered within this general framework of the Berlyne paradigm.

While it is most certainly true that analytic studies of the aesthetic response have often been rather imprecise in defining the stimulus proprities to which subjects have responded in works of art other than stylistic variables; synthetic studies of visual variables such as the collative variables of simplicity-complexity have also been criticized as being too much taken out of the general context of art. (Neperud and Marschalek, 1985). Our purpose in this ongoing series of studies is to clearly return to the use of art images (whole works of art rather then the perceptual components). (McWhinnie, 1985)

The history of tests which have employed slides of art works have had a difficult history. (McWhinnie, 1971) Eysenck's test of visual aesthetic sensitivity (vast) introduced at the International Conference on Pscyhology and Art in Cardiff in 1983 and discussed in Leonardo (Vol. 16, No. 3, 1983) has been criticized on a number of different grounds but chiefly for its' conceptual invalidity in that once more as in the case of so much of Eysenck's work he made use of the so-called expert judge as a criterion measure. (Gear, 1985)

The problem with this newest Eysenck test of preference is of course the old problem of the use of the artist as a normative group. (McWhinnie, 1965) The Salkind Art Test (sapt) (Salkind, 1973) has the advantage over some other instruments, especially the Eysenck test, in that an artist or group of artists were not employed as a normative or criterion group. The order of the test items was

identified as critical in our work. Hence, the emphasis in these studies of preference on Berlyne's ecological variables.

According to Fechner (1876) the principle of successive hedonic contrast, that is preference for a stimulus is either decreased, if it is preceded by a more preferred item whereas; preference is increased if it is preceded by a less preferred stimulus; is an important component of the ecological variables. Martindale and Moore (1985) have noted that the Fechner principle needs to be reconsidered in the design of studies of preferences and especially in the construction of testing instruments. Our earlier research construction of testing instruments. Our earlier research findings also indicated that the Fechner principle of successive hedonic contrast was only partly correct.

METHODS

The Salkind Art Preference Test consists of 30 slides of paintings which are grouped according to the subject matter content and which range in artistic style from the realistic to the abstract and non-objective. The original 30 items test was modified to include nine additional slide items of more realistic examples by 19th century American painters. The two forms of the test are as follows:

(Insert Table One Here)

The Revised Salkind Art Preference Test was given to 72 undergraduate students in a general design history class at a major urban university. For most of the population sample this class was the first art or design class since at least secondary school and maybe for at least half since the one required art course at the middle school level. There are only about 10% art or design majors in the test

sample so we were quite confident that our sample represented a random sample of undergraduate students who, as far as their aesthetic development was concerned, are much like the students to be found in the academic programs of many secondary schools. This sample provided the opportunity of assessing the aesthetic preferences of the late adolescent and our data can be used to make some generalized statements about preferences in the secondary school student as well at least in the general area of art history, art criticism, and aesthetics; the three components of a discipline based art education of which we were the more concerned.

The subjects indicated their preferences in terms of the degree of like or dislike on a five point likert type scale with (1) representing the negative pole and (5) the most positive rating. The data was analysed by a two factor analysis using a SPSS program.

The test took 30 minutes for Salkind One and 40 minutes for Salkind Revised since each slide item was shown for one minute. The test was given in the regular class lecture hall under dimmed lighting and the automatic timing device was used on the slide projector to time each of the slide items.

RESULTS

The test means ranged from a high of 3.94 (s.d. 1.03) for a Matisse painting to a low of 1.88 (s.d. 1.13) for a work by Frank Stella. While the more preferred works tended to be from the realistic segments of each section of the test, this was not always the case.

MOST PREFERRED WORKS		LEAST PREFERRED	
Matisse	3.94	Stella	1.88
Peale	3.54	Rothko	2.01
Morse	3.45	Stella 2	2.26
Fragnard	3.40	De Kooning	2.23
Hicks	3.75	Lichtenstein	2.21

There is evidence that the preferences were the possible result of a bi-polar factor. However, this bi-polar nature of the preference choices with the strong preference choices for the more realistic slides, was not as strong in Salkind Two data as for the Salkind One test results. The addition of the more representational works did seem to effect the pattern of preference that we obtained in our data. Our data also did cast some serious questions as to the validity of the Fechner principle of Hedonic Succession.

When one looks at the factor loadings in our analysis of the nature of the bi-polar factor becomes clear with the factor one representing the rejection of abstraction and factor two the acceptance of realism and familiarity with the subject matter.

(Insert Table Two Here)

(Insert Table Three Here)

With the lone exception of the Matisse painting which was the most preferred of all the items shown on factor one, the other works that are repesented are from the more realistic end of our scale.

With the exception of the Van Ryesdale painting, those test items listed on the factor two axis are the most abstract works in the test and the least preferred. Those items shown above the horizontal axis on factor two and nearest the vertical on the factorial plots are the most preferred works. They are a mixture of old items (from Salkind One) as well as new items from Salkind Two.

DISCUSSION

The results from this study demonstrate three basic aspects of the measure of aesthetic preference. These are:

(a) There is a strong preference for the more representational items as well as the most familiar works.

(b) The addition of the more representational items to the Salkind Two Test did indeed shift the preferences away from the works in the center of each subject grouping (works with more impressionistic or expressionistic content and style) towards preferences for the more representational and with a strong rejection of the most abstract items.

(c) The Hedonic Succession Principal of Fechner while less then perfect in all cases does seem to strongly influence the pattern of the aesthetic preferences which we obtained.

Our work with both forms one and two of the Salkind Test indicates that the situational variables or what Berlyne identified as the ecological variables are critical to the patterns of preferences which can be obtained by this form of testing and research methodology. When given enough examples of realistic works, the subjects will tend to concentrate their preference choices at the more realistic

end of the test scale. When they seem to have fewer realistic examples in the test they will choose from among them and will shift into the middle range of the test items for their preference choices.

In other words, subjects taking such a test may feel either the need or that they should prefer any given number of works or slide items and when given the chance to select more realistic items they will shift their preference from the middle ranges. This was an unexpected observation and seems to indicate that more attention should be paid to the ecological variables then the research has done in the past few years.

We did not use the Salkind Test in both forms with the same population and in a follow up study planned in our laboratory we shall try to compare more directly both forms of the test with the same general test population. In this study the slides were presented in the logical order from the more representational to the abstract. (We in fact did that follow up study as a part of another research report and found that the slide order, random vs. ordered did not make a great deal of difference in the factor loadings obtained for a second test population.)

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Proposed curriculums in art education (DBAE) now being fostered by the Getty Center for the Arts shall place more emphasis on the content of art history, art criticism and aesthetics. Such a focus would seem to bring up the issue of the aesthetic preferences of a given set of learners. How relative are studies such as this one for the more general questions of assessment in art education in general?

The original Salkind study upon which this research was in part at least based, was concerned with the aesthetic preferences of young children. The items in the Salkind test were selected and ranked according to degrees of abstraction in order to study the degrees of preference for abstract vs. representational works. In most of our studies of aesthetic preference we have found that there is a distinct pattern of preference for the more representational works of art.

Our study explored some of the methodological issues which may be also relevent for those in the DBAE movement who must struggle with questions of assessment, in this case the assessment of the aesthetic response in general and the outcomes of instruction in art history in particular. We have discovered in our aesthetic preference research (this is only one of many studies in an ongoing research effort) that while specific preferences for the most and the least preferred works will change from group to group, the pattern of preference remains quite constant. This pattern whether for adults or for children, seems to favor the more representational items, especially when the subject matter of the work of art has to do with the human figure.

These research studies have demonstrated that aesthetic preference can be studied without the use of a criterion group of expert judges against whose preferences the general non-art populations are compared. Aesthetic preference research, especially the research conducted with children in many art education related studies has long succumbed to this pitfall, the use of the expert as norm setting judge.

One can also use whole works of art in the study of preference, that is one does not have to use the psychophysical components as in the Berlyne work, and one does

need to have laboratory equipment and special test settings. Our work was and can be done in the regular classroom and in a group testing situation. We have also tried to employ rather simple statistical procedures, frequencies distributions etc. which can be done by the regular teacher using the standard SPSS programs now available for the microcomputer. The teacher can do their own research and can develop their own descriptive aesthetic studies of students prior to and after instruction. The teacher as a researcher is one of the more exciting paradigms for discipline art education which we have tried to address in our studies by the suggestion of methodologies that can be employed in the more general school setting.

To be effective in matters of instruction in a discipline focused program of art education the teacher needs to have some awareness of the levels of aesthetic preference of their students. Also the topic of preferences themselves are a part of the content of aesthetics and studies like this one could also be used by the children themselves; in other words, the students could begin to conduct their own studies of preferences. When our test are given to our subjects they are done as a part of several lectures on the question of preferences and the students in the design history class are also required to conduct their own research projects.

We do not look upon this research effort as pure research but as applied or action research and therefore the more operational at a classroom level our methods can become the more useful the research will be for both the teacher and the student. Part of the purpose of these studies was to take the research enterprise out of the laboratory (where is was based in the Berlyne studies) and place it once more back into the general arena of contact with the art whether in school or museum.

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TABLE ONE

Two Forms of the Salkind Art Preference Test

Test One	Test Two
Figures	
Fragnard	Fragnard
Monet	West
Leger	Copley
Beardon	Leger
Duchamp	Beardon
Louis	Duchamp
	Louis
Landscape	
Hopper	Hicks
Kandinsky	Hopper
Van Gogh	Early American
Feinniger	Kandinsky
Stella	Van Gogh
	Feinniger
	Stella
Portraits	
Courbet	Peale
Matisse	Morse
Picasso	Courbet
De Kooning	Picasso
Stella	De Kooning
	Stella
Landscape	
Van Rysdale	Van Rysdale
Gauguin	Hicks
Valminick	Fielstein
Mondrian	Mondrian
Rothko	Rothko
Beardon	Beardon
Still Life	
Chardin	Chardin
Matisse	Peale
Picasso	Harnett
Braque	Picasso
Dine	Braque
Lichstein	Dine
	Lichstein

TABLE TWO

Salkind Two Art Preferences

(Factor Analysis - Principal Factors)

	Factor One	Factor Two
FRAGSAL2		.61
WESTSAL2		.63
COPLSAL2		.75
MONTSAL2	.38	
LEGSAL2	.62	
MODNSAL2	.70	
DUCHSAL2	.64	
LOUISAL2	.71	
HICKSAL2		.62
HOPPSAL2		.33
PRIMSAL2		
KANDSAL2	.35	
VANGSAL2	.57	
FEINSAL2	.69	
MODISAL2	.79	
STELSAL2	.36	
PEAL2AL2		.71
MORSALL2		.52
COURSAL2		.64
MATISAL2		.53
PICASAL2	.57	
DEKOSAL2	.65	
STEISAL2	.70	
RYDSSAL2		
HIC2SAL2		.62
GAUGSAL2		.63
FIELSAL2		
VALNSAL2		.48
MOD2SAL2	.45	
RATHSAL2	.67	
MAD3SAL2	.57	
CHARSAL2	.33	
PEAL2AL2		.75
HARNSAL2	.38	.35
MATTSAL2	.32	.34
PIO2SAL2	.51	
BRAQSAL2	.48	
PINESAL2	.58	
LICHSAL2	.71	

Variable Code

Artist Name (4 letters) + Test name (Salkind 2)

TABLE THREE

Salkind Art Preference Test Two

(Rotated Factor Analysis)

	Factor One	Factor Two
FRAGSAL2		.60
WESTSAL2		.64
COPLSAL2		.75
MONTSAL2	.33	
LEGSAL2	.61	
MODNSAL2	.73	
DUCHSAL2	.63	
LOUISAL2	.73	
HICKSAL2		.64
HOPPSAL2		.35
PRIMSAL2		
KANDSAL2	.36	
VANGSAL2	.55	
FEINSAL2	.66	
MODISAL2	.80	
STELSAL2	.36	
PEAL2AL2		.74
MORSALL2		.52
COURSAL2		.65
MATISAL2		.53
PICASAL2	.57	
DEKOSAL2	.68	
STEISAL2	.71	
RYDSSAL2		
HIC2SAL2		.56
GAUGSAL2		.63
FIELSAL2		
VALNSAL2		.52
MOD2SAL2	.49	
RATHSAL2	.71	
MAD3SAL2	.57	
CHARSAL2	.37	
PEAL2AL2		.75
HARNSAL2		.41
MATTSAL2		.39
PIO2SAL2	.48	
BRAQSAL2	.47	
PINESAL2	.56	
LICHSAL2	.72	